Judgment

and Other Poems

by

THOMAS MINOR PELLY

DISCARD

JUDGMENT

and Other Poems

by

THOMAS MINOR PELLY

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By THOMAS MINOR PELLY

To
Maximilian Meyer de Schauensee

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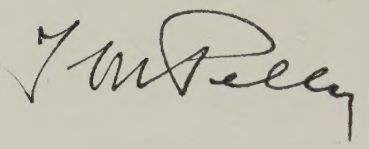

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Part One

JUDGMENT

THE verdict of John Greenlief's suicide
  Emerged as nothing less than cowardice;
  And since no warrant proved his sacrifice
People surmised and let the truth subside.

Rather than venture where their error lay,
  Or reconcile his act, if they were right,
  I merely give what facts have come to light
Since time has borne all prejudice away.

An early marriage with an early parting
  Had run him far to seek forgetfulness—
  Although indifferent to his soul's success—
In unseen faces and an unknown starting.

Thus leaden years had dawned and disappeared,
  Dulling his spirit till at forty-five
  It was a smothered fire—enough alive
To flare or die the way the weather veered.

For if the crushing weight of racked existence
  Had pressed his soul much more, it would have died;
  Yet with a sudden gust of wind applied
An eager conflagration was in fence.

The dice soon rolled! A wind was in the cast;
  A mighty gale that fired the musty hay,
  That flamed his solitude and tore away
The hapless remnants of his prisoned past.

Grasping the cup he drank in frantic haste—
  Ignoring Prudence with her ancient tale
  That rashness falls where Caution cannot fail—
Resolved that not a pause should mean its waste.

This second marriage draws us to survey
  An evening when the bride beside her groom
  Displayed her albums for their living room—
And there the image of her mother lay!

The sorry page which turned her past to name
  Branded the man with overwhelming strife
  And showed his daughter by his former wife
And new found bride were one and both the same.

PIRATE

Beneath a bit of cloud a broken moon
  Shone pale upon a ship with drowsing sails.
On deck the watch was singing out a tune
  That floated through the night in plaintive wails.
While down below the men in tossing rest
  Were dreaming desolate dreams of death-filled fray,
A brigand dreamer stood, chin upon breast
And smoldering eyes—at times so fierce—adroop,
  In silent silhouette above the poop.
And yet he harbored in his mind no thought
  Of shrieking fight or pillaging advance;
He merely strove in solitude to stay
His outlawed anger at the judgment wrought
  On Plunderers—ignoring circumstance.

PARALYSIS

A light refusal of all sympathy,
  Flouting the fetters of his harsh affliction,
Revealed a will in Mark McAllenby
  That would not entertain his heart's conviction.

"My grievances could prison me," he said;
  "But I do not intend to sadly bow
  Beneath the sorry circumstance just now—
With withered legs inside a bitter bed.
I'd rather die than flaunt a crippled mind,"
  He added, forcing his feeble laughter;
"Yet limbs are only luxuries! The kind
  That crutches can commiserate long after . . .

"My legs will gradually become uncaught,
And then I'll spill again Life's whirling draught."

BARBARIAN BLOOD

Majestic Princes of the purple past, your sable coats
And splendid sovereignty have held the moths—they're chewn to motes!
The scattered progeny of your command are blacking boots,
Gathering garbage in the alley ways, and vending fruits.
Descendent minds of your dominions devise our ditches,
Bearing the heritage of your renown in tattered breeches.

Man must divine his destiny, must weave his own success,
Must shun pollution, foster strength, and let the weak digress;
For chromosomes of intellect and rule breed barren grain
When cherished with the crippled cells that cramp a lower strain.
The world has honest royalty embodied in the brain,
But those who join debasing blood cannot bequeath their reign.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

A chapel would have been the place,
  With burning windows hidden near
A twilight glowing on the face
  Half turned above in love and fear.

None to remark or surmise how
  The organ would his soul unlock;
None to descry the fervent brow
  Framed in a powdered wig and stock.

The master at his own desire
  Unburdening a humble heart
In ardent worship with such fire
  As only flames unurged—apart.

Cantatas would have swelled unsung,
  And fugues untold their melodies;
The arches would have boldly rung
  To stately canons' harmonies.

A chapel would have been the place,
  And evening . . . There, once, to have heard
The lofty strain and sweeping grace
  Of praise outpoured with earth obscured.

OLD MUSIC

As hilltops are tipped by the winds of the sky,
And the pine trees are soothed by the winds as they die,
A muffled rustle of melody,
Rising tenderly,
Is stirred—
Then sinks unheard.

A breath of the past and a fragrance once born,
A caress from the depths of the soul of the morn;
An inarticulate passing sigh,
Hidden from the eye,
Is stirred—
Then sinks unheard.

The shadow of rule once prophetic and proud
Bearing echo of voices that once were aloud,
An ancient rhythm of ages gone,
Living on and on,
Is stirred—
Then sinks unheard.

QUATRAIN

There's a message in the rising of the morning
That is written in the brightness of the dawn;
But the brooding in the quiet of the evening
Is as silent as its shadow on the lawn.

TO MY GRANDMOTHER

The woodland fragrance of the untamed rose
The rustle of your walking, ever follows.
Your smile is like a summer, twilight sky—
Both lingering and soft, and kind of eye.
The children find a respite from the rain
  Of other children's teasing,
Find sympathy in sadness and in pain,
  With your benign appeasing.
And thus when to old age I am an heir,
May young ones run, or tip-toe, to my chair!

PROUD QUEEN

The sky's a throneroom bright with courtiers,
And in the center shines the splendid queen—
Scattering moonbeams by her lustrous smiles
And sprinkling here and there her silver sheen.

Behold the satisfaction in her laughter,
And, mark, her eyes display a challenge bold;
For well she knows her cold majestic beauty
Has caused more quests than has the lure of gold.

MASQUERADE

Icy snowflakes swiftly sail,
  Swept by a howling, winter breeze
Which swirls them fast 'round hill and vale,
  And weaves about the trembling trees

With twisted trunks and scrawny arms
  Fleecy robes that soon replace
Their tattered rags with regal charms—
  Ermine capes and dainty lace.

Nothing now of bareness lingers,
Hollow eyes or outstretched fingers.
The wayside swells with whispers gay
For beggars poor are kings to-day!

THE HARBOR

The night hangs gray and dank with fog . . .
  On the waters, wierd as a dream,
Gray monsters indistinctly move
  With bloodshot eyes that barely gleam.

Hoarsely they scream their fearful way,
  While I on shore stand unafraid
And boldly pierce the curtained gloom
  To watch their grotesque figures fade.

Part Two

MARILLYN

Whenever I am in her house,
  Marillyn takes my hand
And leads me through a picture book
  Into her fairy land.

Once I have passed her big front door,
  She is never shy,
And never backs away from me
  Or hides a bashful eye.

She will recite a nursery song,
  Do a little dance,
Or offer me her friendliness
  Without a fearful glance.

But when I meet her in the street,
  Turning her head away,
She tugs her mother by the coat
  And begs her not to stay!

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PANSIES

Little pansies in my garden
  Why do you never smile;
Why gaze upon the narrow lane
  So wistfully the while?
And why are you so serious,
  So thoughtful—so sad?
The sun itself at break of day
  Can hardly make you glad!

Perhaps, like me, you always dream,
  Perhaps, you ever hope
To be beside a hidden spring
  Upon a hillside slope
Where sunshine filters through the green
  Of cloistered, cedar trees,
And where your heads will gently nod
  And bend before the breeze.

MY CROSS-LEGGED TAILOR

There is a tiny man in me
Always plying busily,
A cross-legged tailor all day long
Patching bits of song.

Using colored wisps of thread,
Pink and white and scarlet red,
He stitches tunes, and sonnets too,
Till the day is through.

Sew and mend, old man, and darn,
Weave the sunset with your yarn.
Oh! hurry with your music, do—
Day is almost through!

A MOTTLED BROWN TOAD

A mottled brown toad
Hopped into the road,
Ugly and ancient,
Distorted and bent.
An odious creature,
Deformed in feature
And bloated in body,
Grotesquely alert,
Pushed himself slowly
Through dust and dirt.

Toads have their troubles
  The same as we . . .
Their dream-blown bubbles
  Drown in the sea;
And a toad to a toad
  Is an image fair
Though human mode
  Does find it bare.

A mottled brown toad
Hopped into the road,
Hideous and grim,
Discolored and dim.
He probably thought
When my shadow he caught,
That I was as sadly
Disfigured in body
As ever . . . he . . .
Appeared . . . to me!

Toads have their troubles
  The same as we . . .
Their dream-blown bubbles
  Drown in the sea;
And a toad to a toad
  Is an image fair
Though human mode
  Does find it bare.

MAY SONG

Leave your bonnet behind,
  Hang your coat on the rack;
For the weather is kind,
  And there's nothing we lack.

We will make for a meadow
  Where the asphodels grow
And recline in the shadow
  With the brook just below.

We will talk or sit quiet
  As the mood shall declare,
Or rejoice with the riot
  Of the birds in the air.

And there's many a flower
  That will twine in your hair.
Little daisies will shower . . .
  You just see if I dare!

Come away to a field—
  We will dance; we will sing;
We will skip unrevealed
  Where the meadowlarks ring!

Leave your bonnet behind,
  Hang your coat on the rack;
For the weather is kind,
  And there's nothing we lack.

SEPTEMBER SONG

The blossoms are shattered,
Their petals are scattered,
And Love in September
Is strewn on the ground.
In June we remember
The gardens were glowing—
The roses were showing
That Love had been found.

The fog's on the river,
The morn brings a shiver,
And robins are flying
To lands warm and clear.
The flowers are dying
With hearts grief-distended—
For Romance is ended
And winter is near.

THREE WOMEN

Three women on a porch were sitting,
Rocking their chairs as they plied their knitting.
Said one: "'Tis hot as it can be;
The day is fairly sweltering me!"

Another hastened to cohere:
"Dryest and hottest we've had this year.
It is—I really do believe!"
And promptly wiped her face on her sleeve.

The third just sighed, just shook her head
Meaning a lot that she never said,
And waved the ancient paper fan
Acquired before her courtship began.

Before the steps an old man stopped;
Furrowed the brow that he slowly mopped.
"The air," he said, "is fine to-day!"
Then touched his hat and hobbled away.

DISASTER

He did not know yesterday
  That tomorrow
Would bleed as to-day—
  With sorrow.

Nor did he guess when her finger
  Framed his enchantment,
Her mood could but linger
  A moment.

She curls her lips now to fashion
  Scorn from her heart;
He muffles his passion—
  Apart.

WARNING

Some day your sole companion,
My dear, will be your loneliness;
When answering your tardy call
My laugh will mock the emptiness.
You'll beckon from the windowpane
But I will wave and walk beyond,
To amble up another's steps
Where Love preserves a heart more fond.

HIDDEN LAUGHTER

The moon in your brown eyes burning
  Throws a merry beam,
And through your lashes sparkles
  Its lively, little gleam.

A halo of hidden laughter
  Curls about your head
And in its subtle flashing
  Your happiness is read.

BENEATH A LOVER'S WINDOW

An August moonlit garden
Where silver laces burden
The fragrant-figured shadows,
And tiny meads and meadows
Harbor hollow places
For elfin folk and faces.
A night of gold and jet
And stars, of silhouette . . . .
Listen! Do you mark
That whisper in the dark?
I, too, of love could tell,
But it would break the spell;
For even were you there,
My words would be—bare!

WITH HER BOUQUET

Too soon do flowers fade and fall apart;
  Too soon the freshness of their youth is spent!
Yet does the perfume in each petaled heart
  Still linger on in latent sentiment;
Like music—when its gentle echo rings
  With pale, faint rhythms of departed skies
As fondly to the listening mind it brings
  The murmur of some ancient enterprise.

And so when these few flowers wilt away,
  When they are worn with rising weariness,
Cast them aside, but let your memory stay
  Some recollection of their loveliness.
Thus let their fragrance dwell beyond to-day
  To whisper words I dream—yet cannot say!

LONELINESS

I saw all colors scattered on the sky
And watched the distant sunset showered high—
A throneless shrine to stand before unbow'd.
The purple tapestries of evening cloud
Reflected with the mountains on the bay
And melted with them where the shadows lay.
The stealthy darkness crept into the trees.
A robin broke the silence and the breeze
Brought little secrets from unheard-of seas.
And yet my spirit never was at ease;
I felt some foreign fancies intervene
That spent the splendor of the pageant scene.
A pang of loneliness began to press
And make the balm of Beauty's perfume less.

To paint some brightness on a bitter mood,
I burst the prison door of solitude.
I loved the tender twilight that was left,
But Beauty and Complacency were cleft.
And thus, O surely, it will ever be,
At morn, or noon, or eve, aside from thee!
For in your face the summer's sunset glow,
I meet, reflected from the thoughts that flow
Behind the glad horizon of your mind.
And in your eyes the mystery, I find,
Of evening with its shadows dim and pale.
Your quiet words and gentle ways regale
A lonely soul as nothing else can do.
That's why I came—I always come—to you!

Part Three

ALTA VISTA

Cloaked in a filmy veil of lilac mist
The tranquil slope now rests in sleep nocturnal.
Her breathing is the distant rush of streams
Whose measured echoes dimly rise and fall.

Slim sentinels of war in silent vigil
Stand garrisoned in crowded groups of jet
Above the shadows where the moon has spilled
Silver drippings from her tilted goblet.

Grim warriors, these firs, and staunch of heart!
Faithful and dauntless through the starry night
They guard their mother-mistress till the day
Beacons a respite with his vaunting light.

NEAR LAKE CHELAN

The perfumed fingers of the breeze
  Whose touch is pure tranquility,
Gently caress the drowsing trees
  And rustle them endearingly.
The sky breaks lucid blue in parts
  Through curling wisps of cotton cloud,
And warmer smiles the sun than hearts
  In any passing city crowd.
The beating silence of the mountain,
  The nimble joy of the dancing stream,
These lure a spring into a fountain
  And thoughts rush swift as a morning dream.

DIXON, MONTANA

A scattering of squalid shacks
  Arranged indifferently about
The station, where on rusted tracks
  Some empty freight cars standing out,
Blend with the drear of Beauty's mood,
The bleakness of their solitude.

OLD WOUNDS

The sting of the wounds is gone
But ever the scars remain
Where pricked the envenomed thorn.
The sting of the wounds is gone
But suffering once known,
Returns with a throbbing pain.
The sting of the wounds is gone
But ever the scars remain.

TO----------
(Who Died Young)

We learn to reconcile ourselves to loss
When age and wear with gradual breath combined
Already long have grayed the autumn gloss
And written what must come upon the mind.
Yet when a life endowed with promise fades,
A loved one steering to a bright success,
Then do our burdened hearts beneath the blades
And beat of anguish, melt in bitterness.
This deeper scorch of sorrow never heals,
And secret tears at midnight will endure;
For back the flight of memory ever steals
To sacred paths the years cannot obscure.

A CRY OF YOUTH

The palpitating tide ekes in—then out;
I am but drift on its relentless flow.
Oh, Life you are too short, too swift, too sweet!

When with a purple pageantry about,
The burning sun had beat his clarion blare,
Had flaunted roseate robes to urge his welcome;
When with the brazen subtlety of Spring
Upon the hillside slopes and meadows high,
He had outflung a wooing gleam of warmth,
A golden bud in green, both shy and fair,
Frightened at such familiarity
Refused to banter or to be cajoled
And shrank from his seductive trumpetry.
Observing his approach had failed, the sun
Shook off his cockcomb cloak, revealing then
A sparkling shirt of silver dipped in fire,
And drawing near with turgid pompousness
He droned a hymn in deified delight
Of fecund life and wide fertility.
And all the rainbowed flowers drenched in dew
Exulted to the cadence of his coming.
While from their leaf-hung choirstalls, the birds
Were rioting in rabid happiness.
Yet fearfully the bud just dared a glance
Through lowered lashes—timid and afraid.

Appealing to her through the morning hour
He sang; the earth was nodding with the tune.
And 'neath the tangles of her dainty shawl
The warmth and softness of a lovely skin
Teased the attention of his eager eyes.
Still in the august of the afternoon
With ardent outstretched arms he smiled his plea;
While finally, more bitter than despairing,
He spread a brilliant, saffron scarf about,
And jeweled a distant pedestal of peaks.
Then disappeared with long reproachful gaze
To brood among the paths of the beyond.

Day after day resplendent he returned
To urge his suit with ever pleading words,
Striving each dawn to surpass all beauty
Gone by. And yet his unremitting zeal
Ever produced her apprehensive awe.
Fervent was his song:

"Delicate blossom be my bride;
Spread your petals open wide;
Grasp the laughing ecstacy
That my love will yield to thee."

Unanswering, she
Was tantalizing in her quietude.

Quite indignant beneath the mute rebuff,
The lover nursed an angry wound of ire,
And wrapped himself in scowls of sackcloth clouds
With cold and damp and gloom, shivers and frowns.

While hugging close her cape, the loved one wept,
Lonely for the summer of his loving,
Lonely for the comfort of her shadow,
Lonely for the joy of being happy.
But soon his cinereous mood had spent itself
As a far-flamed candle, worn and melted,
Sputters out in the gathered tears of grief.
So—as if he never had been vexed,
He shone with brighter madness than before.
And harking clear his piercing heraldry
The gleeful blossom, full of wild delight,
As one experiencing ambrosial bliss,
Confessed to him her rapturous happiness.
And unresisting she was gathered in
To give the fragrance of her loveliness.

Too hot! Too hot is that caressing heat,
That reckless fire which scorches, burns and kills
By ravishing degrees! Oh, bitter lot;
Only to know, a short spent day or two,
Such ecstatic joy as freshness and youth,
Then shriveling, wither into adverse clay,
To wilt and fade, and fading fall apart.

With passionate eloquence of perfect bliss,
Acknowledging the promised ecstacy
The flaming flower in her fullness bloomed;
Yet all the while her spirit slowly paled,
The buoyancy of Spring was dying fast,
Dying fast from the burning of the heart.

And so, I fancy, will my beauty pass—
Pillaged by age. But why? I want to live,
To live, to live and shout and sing, and not
To smolder in the fettered ash of age,
Bent and tottering, scourged by infirmities.
I want to laugh and dance forever young!
Why should I, like a petaled flower, fade
And falter in the middle of my song?
Why weaken with my sweetest notes unsung?

The palpitating tide ekes in—then out;
I am but drift on its relentless flow.
Oh, Life you are too short, too swift, too sweet!

EPITAPH

The form within this dreary grave is dead:
No life, no heat, no latent afterglow!
All joy is cold; all bitterness has fled . . .
And over ancient hills the old winds blow.

O, passing stranger do not try to guess
If grief once scarred and broke my scrambling course,
Or why . . . or when . . . ! Imagine Happiness
Befriended me and frightened off Remorse.

The End

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